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ABSTRACT

Because of its focus on improving work performance at the individual, group, organizational, and interorganizational levels, the field of human resource development (HRD) is affected by and responds to trends in work, organizations, and the global economy. A literature review reveals that the following themes recur throughout the HRD literature: work force diversity; cross-cultural issues; the learning organization; technology in work and learning; increasing numbers of older workers; informal learning; and spirituality in the workplace. HRD practitioners are debating a set of core issues related to professionalization of the field. The HRD research has been criticized for lacking a strong theoretical basis. Qualitative methods and stronger links among theory, research, and practice are a continuing focus. Another set of issues involves the relationship between adult education and HRD. Adult education claims a humanistic, learner-centered, self-directed focus on transforming individuals, whereas HRD is oriented toward bottom-line, behaviorist performance improvement aimed at organizational goals. Commonalities and complementarity in the two fields are being identified, especially as many universities merge and integrate these programs. A trend toward aligning vocational education and HRD is also emerging in recognition of their common endeavor of work force education. (A 28-item annotated bibliography constitutes approximately 75% of this document.) (MN)

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TRENDS AND ISSUES ALERT NO. 25

by Sandra Kerka

2001

Human Resource Development

Because of its focus on improving work performance at the individual, group, organizational, and interorganizational levels, the field of human resource development (HRD) is affected by—and responds to—trends in work, organizations, and the global economy. A review of literature, including the annual proceedings of the Academy of Human Resource Development (AHRD), reveals recurring themes: work force diversity, cross-cultural issues, the learning organization, technology in work and learning (Marquardt 1996), increasing numbers of older workers (Allen and Hart 1998; Beatty and Burroughs 1999; Rocco, Stein, and Lee 2000), informal learning (AHRD 1997-2000; Garrick 1998), and spirituality in the workplace (Fenwick and Lange 1998; Kahnweiler and Otte 1997).

HRD practitioners are debating a set of core issues related to the professionalization of the field, including certification (AHRD 1997, 2000; Rowden 1996), ethics and integrity (AHRD 1997, 2000; Burns et al. 1999), and the role and university preparation of HRD professionals (AHRD 1997-2000; Johnston 2001). Cultural differences in HRD roles have been identified (AHRD 1997, 1999; Nijhof and de Rijk 1997; Streumer et al. 1999; Valkeavaara 1998). Research has been criticized for lacking a strong theoretical basis (AHRD 2000; Garavan et al. 1999; Holton 1999). Qualitative methods and stronger links among theory, research, and practice are a continuing focus (AHRD 1998-2000).

Another set of issues involves the relationship between adult education and HRD. Adult education claims a humanistic, learner-centered, self-directed focus on transforming individuals; HRD is oriented toward bottom-line, behaviorist performance improvement aimed at organizational goals (Kuchinke 1999; Peterson and Cooper 1999; Peterson and Provo 2000; Rowden 1996). Commonalities and complementarity in the two fields are being identified, especially as many universities merge and integrate these programs (Grubb et al. 1998; Peterson and Provo 1998, 2000). At the same time, a trend toward aligning vocational education and HRD is emerging, in recognition of their common endeavor of work force education (Gray 1997; Holton and Trott 1996; Masri 1999). The following resources provide more information on trends and issues in HRD.

Academy of Human Resource Development Conference Proceedings. 2000 (ED 441 084-137), 1999 (ED 431 931-972), edited by K. P. Kuchinke. Baton Rouge, LA: AHRD. 1998 (ED 428 224-256), 1997 (ED 428 188-223), edited by R. J. Torraco. Austin, TX: AHRD.
Annual proceedings arranged in symposia addressing themes and trends in the HRD field.

Allen, J. M., and Hart, M. "Training Older Workers: Implications for HRD/HPT Professionals." ***Performance Improvement Quarterly*** 11, no. 4 (1998): 91-102.
As the work force ages, HRD and human performance technology professionals will need strategies for modifying the workplace, reassessing motivational strategies, and altering training practices.

Barrie, J., and Pace, R. W. "Learning for Organizational Effectiveness: Philosophy of Education and Human Resource Development." ***Human Resource Development Quarterly*** 9, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 39-54.
Analyzes concepts of education and training within the context of liberal adult education, finding significant differences. Compares the performance and learning models in human resource development, concluding that the learning model is conceptually richer and more comprehensive.

Beatty, P. T., and Burroughs, L. "Preparing for an Aging Workforce: The Role of Higher Education." ***Educational Gerontology*** 25, no. 6 (September 1999): 595-611.
Given population trends and societal views on aging, academic programs preparing HRD professionals should address competencies needed for dealing with an aging work force.

Burns, J. Z. et al. "Standards on Ethics and Integrity." ***Performance Improvement Quarterly*** 12, no. 3 (1999): 5-30.
Includes general standards, research and evaluation, advertising, publication of work, privacy and confidentiality, teaching and facilitating, and resolution of ethical issues and violations.

Fenwick, T., and Lange, E. "Spirituality in the Workplace: The New Frontier of HRD." ***Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education*** 12, no. 1 (May 1998): 63-87.
Traces the expansion of HRD into spirituality. Identifies associated problems: contradiction between the purposes of spirituality and HRD, religious fundamentalism, invasion of privacy, potential for manipulation, and coercion into the global economy.

Garavan, T. N.; Heraty, N.; and Barnicle, B. "Human Resource Development Literature: Current Issues, Priorities and Dilemmas." ***Journal of European Industrial Training*** 23, nos. 4-5 (1999): 169-179.
Review of the current state of HRD literature includes definitions, models, and dominant biases. Concludes that the literature is fragmented and reflects a diverse range of issues and opinions.

Garrick, J. ***Informal Learning in the Workplace: Unmasking Human Resource Development***. New York: Routledge, 1998.
Discusses why informal learning is a current focus in HRD, how informal learning is defined, and contested notions of industrial relations and training.

Gray, K. "Seeking a 'Tie that Binds': Integrating Training & Development/Human Resource Development and Teacher Preparation." ***Journal of Industrial Teacher Education*** 34, no. 4 (Summer 1997): 80-86.
Presents a rationale supporting the compatibility of HRD and vocational teacher preparation based on a common mission.

Grubb, R. E.; Hemby, K. V.; and Conerly-Stewart, D. L. "Adult Education and Human Resource Development: A Symbiotic Relationship?" ***PAACE Journal of Lifelong Learning*** 7 (1998): 57-66.
Top-ranked competencies for graduate education in HRD identified by practitioners were adult learning, presentation, facilitation, needs assessment, and human relations. Seven of the top 10 were allied with adult education graduate program content.

Holton, E. F., III. "What Does Applied Field Really Mean?" ***Human Resource Development Quarterly*** 10, no. 4 (Winter 1999): 301-304.
If HRD is to advance practice in significant and substantial ways in the future, it may require that some HRD researchers become less connected to practice in the short term.

Holton, E. F., III, and Trott, J. W., Jr. "Trends toward a Closer Integration of Vocational Education and Human Resource Development." ***Journal of Vocational and Technical Education*** 12, no. 2 (Spring 1996): 49-57.
Presents arguments supporting the trend toward integration of vocational education and HRD. Contributions to both fields are examined as foundations upon which to build cooperative efforts.

Johnston, R. "Challenges in Human Resource Development Practitioner Preparation." ***Studies in Continuing Education*** 23, no. 1 (May 2001): 37-53.
Challenges arise from contested perspectives of HRD, complexity of workplaces, and divergent research findings profiling the field. The role, working knowledge, and skills required of practitioners are broadening.

Kahnweiler, W., and Otte, F. L. "In Search of the Soul of HRD." ***Human Resource Development Quarterly*** 8, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 171-181.
Examines the concepts of soul and spirituality and how they apply to the HRD field in terms of values, beliefs, and motivators. Considers ways to nurture the soul of the field.

Kuchinke, K. P. "Adult Development towards What End? A Philosophical Analysis of the Concept as Reflected in the Research, Theory, and Practice of Human Resource Development." ***Adult Education Quarterly*** 49, no. 4 (Summer 1999): 148-162.
Presents three views of adult development—person centered, production centered, and principled problem solving—and discusses their applicability to the HRD profession.

Marquardt, M. J. "Cyberlearning: New Possibilities for HRD." ***Training and Development*** 50, no. 11 (November 1996): 56-57.
Technology is increasingly crucial in HRD. The Internet, intranets, multimedia, virtual reality, distance learning, and electronic performance support systems are some of the technologies with which trainers must become familiar.

Masri, M. W. "The Changing Demands of the 21st Century: Challenges to Technical and Vocational Education." Paper presented at the 2nd International Congress on Technical and Vocational Education, Seoul, South Korea, April 26-30, 1999. (ED 432 656)
Vocational education and training should be considered within the more comprehensive concept of HRD. To ensure that both the human and the professional aspects of vocational education are addressed, two major dimensions should guide the design of HRD: education and work.

McLagan, P. A. "As the HRD World Churns." ***Training and Development*** 53, no. 12 (December 1999): 20-30.
The following trends have implications for HRD: (1) the nature of work is changing, (2) the pace of change is accelerating, (3) the Web is a structural model of team rather than pyramid organization, (4) the bargaining power of the work force is rising, and (5) value exchanges are direct.

Nijhof, W. J., and de Rijk, R. N. "Roles, Competences and Outputs of HRD Practitioners—A Comparative Study in Four European Countries." ***Journal of European Industrial Training*** 21, nos. 6-7 (1997): 247-255.
Responses from HRD practitioners in Belgium, England, Northern Ireland, and Italy were compiled into a profile of roles and competencies that was then compared with similar surveys in the United States.

Peterson, S., and Cooper, M. K. "Themes of Adult Learning and Development in Human Resource Development." In ***40th Annual Adult Education Research Conference Proceedings, DeKalb, Illinois, May 21-23, 1999***, compiled by A. Rose. De Kalb: Northern Illinois University, 1999. (ED 431 901) <http://www.edst.educ.ubc.ca/aerc/1999/99peterson.htm>
Explores the practices and philosophies of adult education and HRD, so that integrated communities of practice may be created by understanding the ways in which adult education theory informs the field of HRD.

Peterson, S. L., and Provo, J. "Profile of the Adult Education and Human Resource Development Professoriate: Characteristics and Professional Fulfillment." ***Adult Education Quarterly*** 48, no. 4 (Summer 1998): 199-215.
A survey of 113 members of the Commission of Professors of Adult Education and 50 AHRD members found few differences except in age, rank, and salary. The two faculties are compatible and could be integrated.

Peterson, S. L., and Provo, J. "A Case Study of Academic Programme Integration in the USA." ***International Journal of Lifelong Education*** 19, no. 2 (March-April 2000): 103-114.
Integration of adult education and HRD faculties required the resolution of andragogical, philosophical, and theoretical differences and identification of places where the fields converge and diverge. The realignment links theory and practice and enables the disciplines to complement each other.

Phillips, J. J. ***HRD Trends Worldwide: Shared Solutions to Compete in a Global Economy***. Woburn, MA: Butterworth-Heinemann, 1999.
Discusses worldwide HRD trends that were identified in a study of the HRD practices in 35 countries. Outlines four steps for working with the trends.

Rhodes, C. "Postmodernism and the Practice of Human Resource Development in Organisations." ***Australian and New Zealand Journal of Vocational Education Research*** 4, no. 2 (November 1996): 79-88.
HRD in organizations can be used as a coercive tool that reinforces existing power structures. The emerging postmodern organization must consider individual wisdom, values, and knowledge; recognize differences; remove inequalities; and create opportunities for all voices to be heard.

Rocco, T. S.; Stein, D.; and Lee, C. "Age and HRD Policy Development: Issues to Consider." In ***Proceedings of the 19th Annual Midwest Research-to-Practice Conference***, edited by M. Glowacki-Dudka. Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2000.
Different policy, career development, and training strategies are needed for older workers who decide to retire from, remain in, or return to periods of part- or full-time work.

Rowden, R. W., ed. ***Workplace Learning: Debating Five Critical Questions of Theory and Practice. New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*** no. 72. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Winter 1996.
Presents debates over (1) the purpose of HRD (improving individual or organizational performance); (2) whether HRD is part of adult education; (3) origin of the knowledge base (theory and research or practice; and (4) certification of HRD practitioners.

Streumer, J. N.; van der Klink, M. R.; and van de Brink, K. "The Future of HRD." ***International Journal of Lifelong Education*** 18, no. 4 (July-August 1999): 259-274.
Compared to a U.S. study, Dutch human resources professionals rated the following trends affecting the future of HRD as most important: integration of learning and work, importance of organizational innovation, and measurement of business results using consumer-relevant criteria.

Valkeavaara, T. "Human Resource Development Roles and Competencies in Five European Countries." ***International Journal of Training and Development*** 2, no. 3 (September 1998): 171-189.
Comparison of trainer surveys in England, Italy, the Netherlands, Germany, and Finland showed the culture-bound nature of HRD. English and Finnish practitioners perceived themselves as change agents, Germans as trainers. HRD practice did appear to have a common core of competencies.

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